

September 25, 2009

Weekly Update: H1N1 – A New Kind of Flu – What You Need to Know!

Susanne Kufahl, Assistant Administrator and Public Information Officer, Riley County-Manhattan Health Department

2030 Tecumseh Road

Manhattan, Kansas 66502

785-776-4779 x 225

sk.rchealth@kansas.net

Seasonal Flu: Don't Wait...Vaccinate!

Seasonal flu vaccine is available to the general public at the health department during regular clinic hours. You do not need an appointment. We currently have plenty of seasonal flu vaccine. Flu shots are \$25 but no one will be refused for inability to pay. Seasonal flu shots are still generally available at health providers across the community. Influenza activity is already twice as prevalent in the community as usual for this time of year. The flu shot will provide protection throughout the duration of the flu season. It will not protect you against the new H1N1 virus (swine flu).

Who should get it? Everyone over the age of 6 months who is not allergic to any component of vaccine.

H1N1 Vaccine News

Local health providers and school personnel continue to meet weekly to coordinate plans to vaccinate this community. We are working to accomplish this in a timely manner that is as convenient as possible for our residents. Our goal is to vaccinate all who need and want it.

FluMist and Target Populations - KDHE tells us to expect the H1N1 vaccine supply to be quite limited when it first becomes available in a few weeks. The first type of H1N1 vaccine that will arrive is FluMist, the nasal spray flu vaccine. This vaccine is for persons between the ages of 2 and 49 years who do not have any health problems. KDHE has applied this information to the CDC's highest risk population recommendations and determined that FluMist should first be offered to two groups:

- 1) health care workers who may have direct contact with persons who may be infected. These health care workers cannot be pregnant or have any health problems.
- 2) children with no health problems between the ages of 2 and 4 years.

Getting an H1N1 Flu Shot - We anticipate vaccine for H1N1 flu shots to be available later in October and to become more plentiful to serve a wider population as autumn continues. We are still waiting for the results of clinical trials for children under 10 years of age; at this point we are told that children under 10 will require two shots. We are tentatively planning on the possibility of holding school clinics in early December.

Availability Announcements - When any H1N1 vaccine becomes available, we will post this information on our website. The health department is on the Riley County website at www.rileycountyks.gov under departments. The URL is <http://www.rileycountyks.gov/index.aspx?nid=759> We will also post what

populations are approved for getting the vaccine at the time and where to get it. This information will also be on our phone and sent to newspaper and radio stations. When we have an adequate supply of vaccine we will hold special H1N1 flu vaccine clinics Mondays – Thursdays from 4:00 – 5:30 PM and Fridays from 7:00 – 8:30 AM. When we hold these clinics, we will not be dispensing H1N1 flu vaccine during other times. When we have an adequate supply we will also make the vaccine available through community providers for target populations.

Cost – H1N1 vaccine will be provided free of charge by all providers. Private providers may charge administration fees. The health department will bill insurance for administrative fees but individuals will not be charged. Persons without insurance coverage will not be charged at the health department. It is our goal to vaccinate all who need it, regardless of ability to pay.

Vaccine Consent Forms are being made available throughout the community, at schools, and websites such as the health department's at www.rileycountyks.gov. Completing consent forms before coming to a vaccination clinic will speed the process up considerably.

FAQ

How widespread is the flu now? Kansas is one of several states that has reached the “widespread” level of flu illness. That is worse than the current national average and the earliest it has ever been this prevalent. Several southern states, including Texas and Tennessee, are currently experiencing much more illness than we are in Kansas. KDHE reports that 12,000 U.S. children are out of school due to school closings, though the CDC and KDHE are not recommending school closure. The total number of local cases cannot be known, but Mercy Health Center's ER is seeing generally double the usual number of persons with influenza like symptoms for this time of year. Six persons, all with underlying health conditions, have died from H1N1 in Kansas since August.

Is the H1N1 vaccine safe? Yes. Scientists have been making safe flu vaccine for decades, this particular H1N1 virus is new, the process for making vaccine for it is not. Clinical trials in the United States and around the world have found it safe and effective. Generally, when H1N1 vaccine is offered to your population group, you should get it.

Can I get the seasonal and H1N1 shot at the same time? Probably. If you have received any live virus vaccination you will need to wait a number of weeks to receive another live virus vaccination. Examples of live virus vaccinations include FluMist and several common childhood vaccines such as for mumps, measles or chicken pox. Complete the Vaccine Consent Form and providers will know what you can have.

How much vaccine is going to be available? The United States has increased its order to a total of 251 million doses. The world needs approximately 500 million doses. The United States is one of nine of the world's richest countries donating 10% of its order to under-developed countries.

Will antivirals be available? KDHE tells us that private providers have an adequate supply of antivirals such as Tamiflu and Relenza. Public health has a separate supply for the uninsured and underinsured. Guidance for the distribution of this supply will be provided next week. The CDC continues to caution against overuse of antivirals due to cost and the dangers of developing resistant flu strains.

For further information please contact the health department or go to www.kdheks.gov/H1N1.